

WILKINSBURG BOROUGH
Council Work Session
July 16, 2014

CALL TO ORDER

President McCarthy-Johnson called the meeting to order at approximately 6:35 PM in Council Chambers, second floor of the Municipal Building, 605 Ross Avenue, Wilkinsburg, PA.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called to establish a quorum. Present were Mr. Lefebvre, Ms. Garrett, Mr. Taiani (via telephone connection), Ms. Trice, Ms. Moore, Ms. Grannemann, Mr. Shattuck, Ms. Macklin, and President McCarthy-Johnson. Borough Manager Marla P. Marcinko was also present. Mayor John A. Thompson was absent. A quorum was established.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Following the pledge of allegiance, a moment of silence was observed to remember victims of violent crime.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None at this time.

CAPITAL PLANNING

President McCarthy-Johnson turned the meeting over to Mr. Shattuck, Chairperson of the Capital Planning Committee. Mr. Shattuck provided the following status report:

- Bids drastically exceeded the budget for the salt storage project. The design is being reviewed and the project will be re-bid.
- Whitney Field (rear) storm and sanitary repairs are in process; additional damaged pipe was discovered, which has increased project costs.
- The second phase of the Ferguson Park/Playground Project is underway; the playground is being kept open during construction. Asphalt is being removed and the project is expected to be completed by the end of August.
- New trash receptacles are on order; they are the same style of receptacles as the cans currently on Penn Avenue. The new receptacles will be placed in parks and playgrounds, and are manufactured here in Wilkinsburg.
- The Parks & Recreation Advisory Board has undertaken a master planning project for Whitney Park. The Board will be meeting with Lami Grubb Architects to discuss scope of work, which will include a public process for community input. The budget for the project is \$5,000.

Mr. Taiani inquired about the construction activities on Rebecca Avenue and installation of gas lines. He questioned whether the sidewalks will be replaced. Ms. Marcinko stated that they are required to replace

the sidewalks. Ms. Macklin commented that some of the sidewalks on Penn Avenue (a State-maintained roadway) were also not properly restored. She commented on an ordinance which the Borough had adopted requiring curb-to-curb restoration for utility cuts. She questioned whether the Borough is paying for the sewer repairs at Whitney. Ms. Marcinko stated that the replacement is the responsibility of the Borough.

FINANCE

1. Monthly Financial Reports.

Mr. Lefebvre asked if there were questions on the report.

Ms. Macklin commented that the increase in real estate transfer tax revenue is positive and means more property is changing hands. Mr. Egler stated that the primary reason for the increased revenue was the high-value sale of Life Care Hospital within the past several months.

Mr. Egler reported that he is working with Chief Coleman on the Police Special Detail accounts and hopes to have more information for Council next month.

Ms. Macklin noted that real estate current commission is up significantly. Mr. Egler stated that a charge may have been posted twice. He will follow up. Ms. Macklin questioned whether the Borough is tracking the real estate tax refunds, mostly occurring as a result of appeals of the 2013 County-wide reassessment. Mr. Egler stated that the information is available in summary form and detail can be retrieved, if needed.

Ms. Macklin questioned the reason for the computer hardware actual costs, which exceed the budget numbers. Ms. Marcinko stated that the purchase of 6 computers was included in the 2013 budget, but the actual purchase did not occur until 2014. Therefore, the year-end actual figure for computer hardware purchases should be significantly less than the projected year-end figure. All twenty-one computers were purchased in 2014, as opposed to 6 in 2013 and 15 in 2014, which was how the purchases were budgeted.

Ms. Macklin noted that Workers' Compensation costs are up.

2. Discussion – Review process for Delinquent Real Estate Tax and Municipal Service Fee Collection.

Mr. Lefebvre stated that Council and School Board representatives interviewed 4 proposers for delinquent tax collection. Two of the 4 were selected to continue on in the process. Additional information will be sought from both firms, and second interviews are scheduled to be held on July 22.

Ms. Macklin expressed concern regarding the severance provisions of the contract with Portnoff Law Associates. She is under the impression that Portnoff will continue collection on those accounts which they currently hold and that the new collector will begin collections on 2014 delinquencies. She requested clarification on the legal fees and costs which may be owed to PLA if the accounts upon which they have conducted collection efforts are moved to a new collector. Ms. Marcinko informed

Council that the Borough does not currently have an agreement with PLA for tax collection. The contract was terminated effective June 30, 2014. Portnoff is willing to accept payments and issue thirty-day payoffs through the end of July, 2014. Ms. Marcinko stated that a discussion needs to be held with PLA to determine what options are available to the Borough. Ms. Trice commented that it was her understanding that the notice of intent to terminate the contract with Portnoff would be issued but they could still collect through the end of December, 2014.

Ms. Trice questioned whether the data being gathered by the interns, on abandoned properties, could be used to identify those delinquent tax accounts which may be uncollectable. Ms. Macklin commented on the need to develop strategies to accelerate tax collection and suggested this be discussed at the next strategic planning session of Council.

Mr. Lefebvre commented on the information received from Finance Director Dave Egler regarding business privilege tax collection. The data provided does not list the location on which the business income is being earned, which is not useful. Mr. Lefebvre believes this missing data is important. Ms. Macklin suggested scheduling a meeting with Berkheimer to review their collection process.

Mr. Lefebvre commented on the MSF analysis prepared by Mr. Egler. For 2013, the revenue (delinquent and current) was slightly under \$1,000,000. The cost of refuse collection paid to the City of Pittsburgh was roughly \$880,000. The cost of MSF collection, paid to the TCVCOG, was roughly \$16,000 for a total expense of \$896,000. Mr. Lefebvre suggested that Council consider outsourcing recycling collection. He requested that the Borough Manager prepare a cost comparison of current expenses related to recycling and the cost to outsource the service. Ms. Marcinko stated that the City of Pittsburgh was asked to provide a quote for recycling collection and they provided a figure which was not affordable, reflective of their lack of interest in providing this service to the Borough.

Ms. Macklin inquired about the possibility of painting the interior and replacing the floor tiles in the elevator. Ms. Marcinko stated that this project is not high on the list of priorities.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Lefebvre commented on the poor pavement restoration, being performed by Wilkinsburg Penn-Joint Water Authority, where waterlines were replaced or repaired over the winter. Ms. Marcinko received information from Dave Gilliland, Borough Engineer, that WPJWA water lines were being replaced between Savannah and Mifflin Avenues back in June. Pavement has been proposed, curb to curb, from Mifflin Avenue to Horace Way, the alley between Savannah and Mifflin Avenues, and the southern lane of Whitney Avenue from Horace Way to Savannah Avenue. Mr. Gilliland recommended that the Borough pave the other half of the street, between Horace Way and Savannah Avenue, at a cost of \$4,276.30. Ms. Macklin agrees and questioned whether the Borough's ordinance for street openings includes a requirement for curb-to-curb restoration. Ms. Marcinko will confirm that WPJWA will be contracting with a paving company to complete the final restoration.

A motion was made by Ms. Trice and seconded by Ms. Macklin to approve the paving of the northerly half of Whitney Avenue from Horace Way to Savannah Avenue, at a cost of \$4,276.30.

All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

GENERAL MATTERS

1. Approving Resolution No. 14-059 – Street closure – Mifflin Avenue United Methodist Church.

Moved: Mr. Lefebvre

Second: Ms. Trice

Ms. Macklin noted that the event is being sponsored as a fund raiser for the Animal Rescue League.

All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

Ms. Trice questioned the response from Ms. Marcinko to an inquiry about a parking charge on the bill list for a meeting with RAAC regarding the Train Station. Ms. Marcinko responded that RAAC owns the building and the WCDC had a proposed development plan prepared, which was provided to Council some time ago. The meeting was attended by representatives from PHLF and the RAAC to discuss sources of funding to stabilize the structure. The Borough received CDBG funding for the underpass engineering about two years ago. The possibility of tying the underpass reconstruction project to the train station improvements was also discussed, with the thought being that a larger project, related to transit, may have more opportunities for funding. The costs to repair all three underpasses was estimated to be in excess of three million dollars. The engineering plan for the Penn Avenue underpass is not final.

President McCarthy-Johnson announced that the Strategic Planning Session of Council will be held on July 26, 2014, commencing at 9:00 AM. She asked Council to review the Comprehensive Plan and other planning studies, and requested that agenda items be submitted to her prior to Wednesday, July 23. Council will be setting its goals and objectives for the next two years at the Session

Hosanna House is offering a Youth Deck Hockey clinic, sponsored by the Pittsburgh Penguins. Volunteers are being recruited to coach or referee, and President McCarthy-Johnson asks those interested to contact her.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, President McCarthy-Johnson adjourned the meeting at approximately 7:30 PM.

Vanessa McCarthy-Johnson
President of Council